

July 2, 2010

STENEHJEM ISSUES CEASE AND DESIST ORDER AGAINST LIBERIAN CENTER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

BISMARCK – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem today issued a Cease and Desist Order banning the Liberian Center for Growth and Development and its principals, Naboth Zondo, Peter B. Belleh, and Jenkins Tarwoe from engaging in misrepresentations and illegal charitable solicitations in North Dakota.

The Liberian Center is registered with the Ohio Secretary of State as a domestic nonprofit corporation. However, “the Center” and its three principals currently are using Fargo, North Dakota mailing addresses. Stenehjem has initiated an investigation because the entity has engaged in charitable solicitations in violation of North Dakota law. According to Stenehjem, the Center and its principals engaged in charitable solicitations without being registered with the Secretary of State. In addition, they have made a number of substantial misrepresentations about a July Fargo fundraising event in which they falsely claimed the Liberian President and Governor John Hoeven would be attending, and that they had Governor Hoeven’s endorsement.

The Center and its principals are claiming that they are trying to raise money for the establishment of a public library system in Liberia. The entity falsely claimed to be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. They, however, are attempting to use or share the 501(c)(3) status of another entity, falsely claiming the other entity is a “parent” entity.

Stenehjem has directed the Consumer Protection Division to issue a Civil Investigative Demand to the Center and its principals to obtain further information in this matter. “I am concerned about the illegal solicitations and I’m particularly troubled by their misuse of the Governor’s Office in an attempt to falsely create the State of North Dakota’s stamp of approval for their fundraising activities or other agenda,” Stenehjem said. “While it is a wonderful goal to provide books to Liberia, if that is what is actually occurring, these individuals must do so in a lawful and straight forward manner.”

According to Parrell Grossman, director of the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division, the consumer protection division staff discussed the concerns with Naboth Zondo. “Despite Mr. Zondo’s attempts to explain their conduct, we remain very concerned about the unauthorized solicitations and the misrepresentations,” Grossman said.

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